

The indenturing of apprentices is a matter which requires a considerable amount of attention, and I am continually finding instances where boys who have been taken on as apprentices have not been indentured as required by the different awards. Notice to get the boys bound have, however, always been complied with.

The sawmilling trade, which, during the years from 1903 to 1905, gave so much trouble in regard to payment for time worked, has now practically ceased to cause any trouble. A week's work consists of forty-six hours, and employers on my advice are now computing wages at per hour, dividing the weekly pay by 46.

Great difficulty has been experienced through the long delay in hearing cases that have been filed for hearing before the Court. Many cases are filed and are not heard for six, eight, or even twelve months afterwards. In many of these cases witnesses have left the district, and when the cases are called, through inability to procure evidence the cases have had to be withdrawn by the Department, or are dismissed by the Court. In cases where back pay is being sued for, the employee concerned frequently suffers great inconvenience in having to wait so long for the wages due to him. In such cases it would, in my opinion, be much better to sue in the Magistrate's Court for the wages due, without waiting for the Arbitration Court to deal with the cases, provided that the Inspector has conclusive proof that the minimum wages have not been paid, and that the employee has not acquiesced in the breach.

Yours, &c.,

C. E. ALDRIDGE,

Inspector of Awards.

The Chief Inspector of Factories.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 18th April, 1906.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my report for the year ending the 31st March, 1906.

During the year I have visited factories and workrooms throughout the colony, and am pleased to state that I found them generally in a very satisfactory condition. During my recent visit to the South Island I found it quite a pleasure to go through the factories there with their beautifully clean dining-rooms and lavatories. In the South some employers, who cannot afford the space for a dining-room on their factory premises, rent for this purpose the nearest most suitable room available, and appoint a woman to clean it, keep it in order, &c.

Steam laundries are still increasing. These are all buildings of the very best class, well lighted, well ventilated, and sanitary conditions good. This is an industry which is expanding very much. Notwithstanding the introduction of the most up-to-date machinery all available labour is kept fully employed.

The dressmaking trade in general has kept busy.

The tailoring order trade has kept busy throughout the year. In the early part of the year, however, there was a slight slackening-off in the ready-made clothing lines.

Millinery trade generally has kept busy.

Woollen-mills: These buildings are all good, well ventilated, well lighted, and with good sanitary conditions.

There was a considerable slackening-off of trade in this line in the early part of the previous year, and I am sorry to say that it has not yet regained its normal condition.

Women engaged in the boot trade have been kept fully employed during the year. These factories also are generally in good condition, and well kept.

Straw-hat and felt-hat making are industries which are absorbing a large number of young-women workers, and are carried on in clean, healthy buildings.

Wax-vesta making: Both these factories are good, and in every sense up to date. In this industry employment could be given to a much larger number of hands if they are available.

The ammunition-factory in Auckland is giving employment to a large number of young girls. The building is good, well lighted, and well ventilated. Every reasonable consideration is shown for the protection of the health of those employed.

In the trades, such as tweed-cap making, ladies' white clothing, upholstering, paper-ruling, folding, cardboard-box making, fruit preserving and pickling, lolly-making, &c., all available labour has been kept fully engaged during the year, and employment could be given to more hands if obtainable.

In almost all trades in which women are employed the full extent of overtime has been worked, and in some instances a good deal more would have been worked if the Department could have allowed it.

Owing to the careful administration of section 31 of the Factories Act, the wages of the workers of the colony have been much increased. Also its amendment of last session has been a boon to workers over twenty years of age.

The certificate of employment which it is now necessary for persons to produce is a great advantage to both employers and employed. I have heard many employers speak most highly of it, also it will facilitate the work of Inspectors very considerably.

Our women workers are still slow about organizing and taking advantage of the many privileges offered them under the arbitration laws. Those organized are tailoresses, wax-vesta operatives of Dunedin and Wellington, Dunedin cardboard-box makers, Otago hosiery-workers and felt-hat makers. A few other societies of working-women sprang up during the year, but died out almost as quickly.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

This Act is now working fairly smoothly. The compulsory payment of apprentices with an annual increase of wages and payment for all overtime is much appreciated by those in the trade. With regard to hours, however, I should mention that the application of this Act to assistants employed in refresh-